

# **Building Cultures of Well-Being: The Happiness Approach**

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**HAPPINESS IS NOT OUT THERE  
FOR US TO FIND. THE REASON  
THAT IT'S NOT OUT THERE IS  
THAT IT'S INSIDE US.**

**SONJA LYUBOMIRSKY**

**MERCECARDUS.COM**

# Presentation Outline

1. Need for Happiness Programming
2. Foundations of Happiness and Well-being Research
3. Designing a Happiness Course
4. Ideas/Discussion/Questions



# Learning Objectives

1. Understand the theoretical underpinnings of happiness related research
2. Design an evidence-based university happiness course for undergraduate general studies
3. Describe strategies for facilitating subjective well-being on a college campus

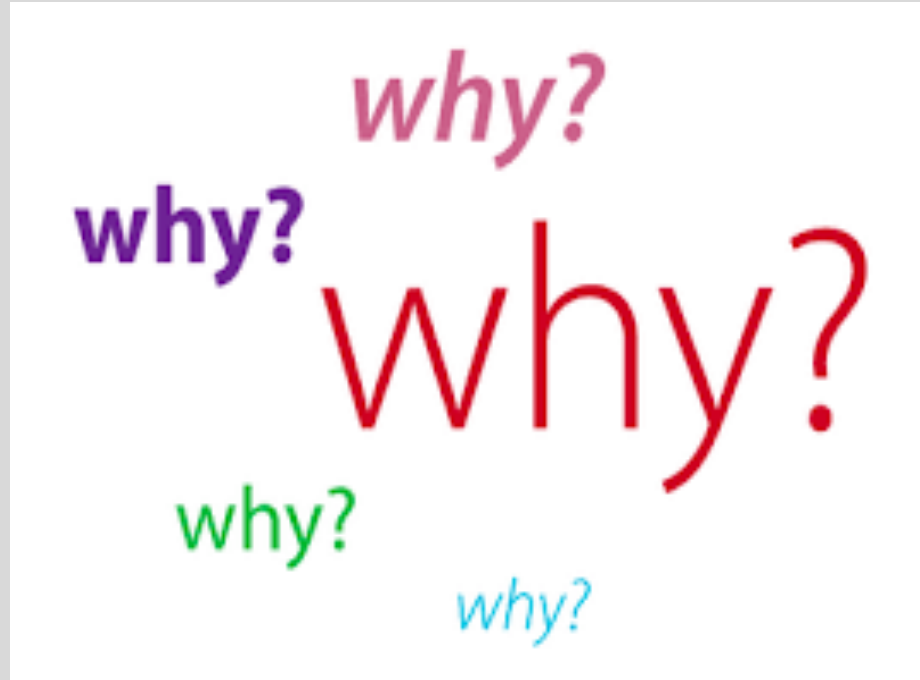
# Truth or Myth?

1. **Money can buy happiness**
  2. **Happiness is genetic, and cannot be changed.**
  3. **Married couples are happier.**
  4. **Getting the right job will make you happy.**
  5. **Success leads to happiness.**
1. **Truth AND Myth:** after ~\$75K/yr, there are no additional happiness gains.
  2. **Myth:** 50% = genetic, 10% = external circumstances, 40% = within your control through intentional actions!
  3. **Truth AND Myth:** Getting married greatly boosts happiness, but after 2 yrs, you revert to pre-engagement happiness levels
  4. **Myth:** The more we attain, the happier we become. But the more we attain, the more we want, which negates the increased happiness
  5. **Myth:** extensive research supports reversing the formula for success, as Achor discussed in his Ted Talk, Happiness → Success

**Truth:** "Happiness does not come from outside of us; it dwells within."



# Why does it matter?



# Why does it matter?

*I am happier and though that might not seem that important to whomever is reading this, I assure you it is. **I am making better grades in my other classes because I found my drive.** EVERYONE SHOULD TAKE THIS CLASS!*

*I believe that this class needs to be a requirement for all the students at UNCW. Not everyone talks about their personal problems, issues and struggles; **mental, emotional and physical health is really important for everyone, especially college students. This class really showed me that I need to never forget about my health and need to focus on being happy. It helped me find depression and be more open towards other people. I feel like i would be drowning in depression if I wouldn't take this class and I am forever thankful to my friend who told me about it. A lot of people don't realize that they're miserable until they see a new perspective.** This is a must take!*

*Excellent class and professor. This class was **everything every college student should hear.** A very refreshing course and one of my favorites by far.*

## **\*College students who seek counseling...**

- **61% anxiety**
- **49% depression**
- **45% stress**
- **31 % family issues**
- **28% academic performance**
- **27% relationship problems**



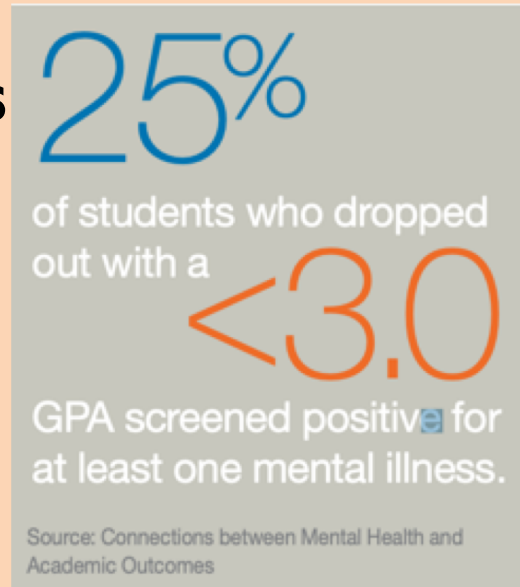
## **Other alarming statistics**

- **1 in 4 has a diagnosable disease**
- **40% don't seek help**
- **80% feel overwhelmed by responsibilities**
- **50% become so anxious they struggle with class**
- **64% of young adults dropped out of college due to a mental health related reason**

**\*Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**

# Investing in Mental Health

- **90% of administrators agree that mental health is a significant issue at their institutions\***
  - **Psychological distress is common**
  - **Students aren't seeking help**
  - **Investing in mental health helps students**
    - ✓ **Academic performance**
    - ✓ **Student retention**
    - ✓ **Campus Safety**
    - ✓ **Reduces suicide rates**
    - ✓ **Promotes resilience and reduces stress**
    - ✓ **Helps reduce substance abuse**



\*Source Kognito. (2015). [Increasing retention through improved mental health](#)

# A Positive Approach

- **Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders.**
- **A state of well-being in which the individual:**
  - **Realizes his/her own abilities**
  - **Copes with the normal stresses of life**
  - **Works productively and fruitfully**
  - **Is able to make a contribution to his/her community**

Positive approach is  
one of the keys  
to a successful and happy life



# The Happiness Advantage / Anchor

- Positive brains have an advantage over neutral or negative brains
- 75% of success comes from actions that can be taught/learned
- Only 25% of success is predicted by IQ
- Brains CAN be trained to be positive
- A “positive approach” can increase productivity

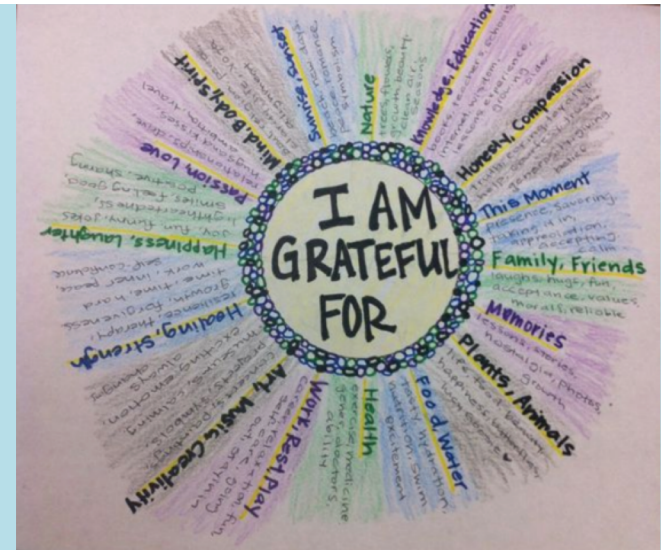


# Happy people are...

- Bigger Earners
- More Productive at Work
- More Creative
- Better Negotiators
- In More Fulfilling Relationships
- Involved in Deeper Social Networks
- More Philanthropic
- Better at Coping with Stress
- Healthier and Live Longer

# Happy people do...

- Live in the Present
- Really Savor Pleasures
- Commit to Lifelong Goals
- Express Gratitude & Enjoy Helping Others
- Cultivate Social Relationships
- Have Optimism About Their Future
- Process Stress Better
- Physical Activity Regularly
- Have a Spiritual Side





# Designing A Happiness Course

- The Research
- Course Content  
Syllabus
- Obtaining  
Administrative Support
- Navigating Curriculum  
Committee



# The Research...

What is happiness?



# Martin Seligman

- “Father” of Modern Happiness Theory
  - Authentic Happiness
- Happiness Theory → Well-being Theory
- Goal of Well-being Theory: To Flourish



- Positive emotion
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishment

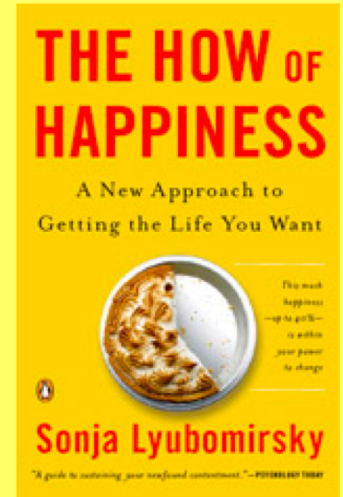


# Sonja Lyubomirsky

- Experience frequent positive emotions
- Happiness is subjective
- 40% solution

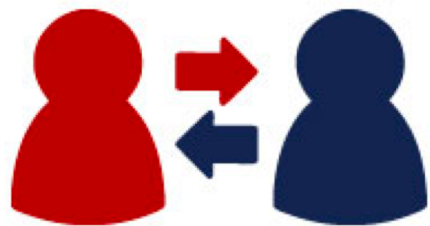
## 6 Strategies

1. Practicing Gratitude & Positive Thinking
2. Investing in Social Connections
3. Managing Stress, Hardship, & Trauma
4. Living in the Present
5. Committing to Your Goals
6. Taking Care of Your Body and Soul



# Designing a Happiness Course

- **Delivery Format**
  - **Face-to-face**
  - **Online**
  - **Hybrid**



Student Interaction

# Course Content/Syllabus

- Knowledge and application
  - Practice lifelong well-being **skills**
  - In- and outside-class activities
- Self-Reflection
- Class Discussions
- Resources
  - [The How of Happiness](#)
    - [Sample Course Syllabus - Lyubomirsky](#)
    - [Sample Course Syllabus - UNCW](#)
  - [Greater Good Magazine](#)
  - [Greater Good in Action](#)



# Administrative Support

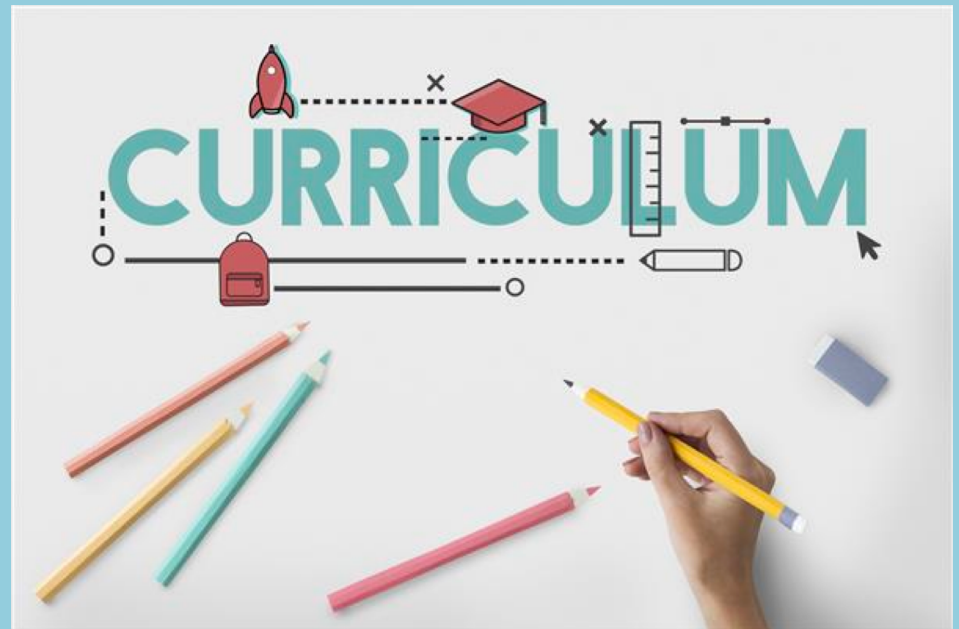
- **Happiness Misconceptions**
  - **Title**
  - **Parents' perceptions**
  - **Students' perceptions**
- **Rigor**
- **Evidence-based (e.g., Harvard, Stanford)**
- **General Studies Requirement**



It isn't fluff:  
The science of well-being

# Navigating Curriculum Committee

- Credibility
  - Distinction from psychology
- Who owns the course?
- Student need





# Other Happiness Strategies

- **Student Affairs**
  - **Counseling Center**
  - **Happiness Week**
- **Study Abroad**
- **Living Learning Community**
- **Yoga Minor**
- **Student Retention Efforts**
  - **Cross-Campus Collaborations**
  - **Mentoring**
  - **Education & Awareness**
  - **Resilience, EI, Executive Function**



# Other Happiness Ideas...

- **What are you doing on your campus?**
- **Other ideas?**



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